

- It is virtually impossible for a warden with a family to exist without working an extra job, it is therefore ^{difficult} ~~nearly impossible~~ to be available for response 24/7 as required of the job, with very limited overtime and no out call pay.
- The cost to hire and train a warden in the first year is over \$ 13,000 and does not include salary and operations, not a good investment if the officer leaves the agency shortly thereafter.
- Applicant numbers have dropped from several 100's to around 60 qualified applicants for each general hire we advertise nationally. Many potential applicants do not follow through with the process when they find out the pay scale despite having a Bachelors degree and in most instances, work related experience. As recently as 2007, the enforcement division had to have two general hires in the same year to fill 8 vacancies with top notch candidates. Of those, only 4 remain.
- City, county, states and federal agencies are actively attending high school and college career fairs seeking potential officers. The number of genuinely interested candidates for a warden job is dismal at best.

Several sessions previous, the legislative body successfully corrected near similar pay issues for another state law enforcement agency. ^{@ these} ~~In fact that bill was titled similarly and added a fee on vehicle registrations to retain trained officers.~~ This bill would, as mentioned previously not require Montana taxpayers or license holders to foot the bill. Though it is no secret we are slowly coming out of a significant recession, this would not be in place until 2012 and be funded by non-resident license holders who come to our state to enjoy our natural resources.

Therefore for enforcement "off the pavement" the public depends on this handful of officers to preserve and protect the last best place. I urge you to support this bill to retain these competent and qualified game wardens.

mm

Thank You

I will also provide each member with handouts related to the topic and this bill